AN ELEGIAC ON THE DEATH OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

DELIVERED AT [illegible]

FEBRUARY 22, 1800

BY

DOCTOR [illegible] BRIGGS

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DOCTOR DAVID S. BROOKS

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Eulogy, &c.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

On this gloomy occasion I arise to address this respectable audience. And did I not this moment anticipate your friendly indulgence, on account of my inexperience as a public speaker, together with the short time allotted me for that purpose, I should sink in the attempt. The attentive gravity, the venerable appearance of this audience, the dignity which I behold in the countenances of so many in this assembly, the solemnity of the occasion upon which we have met together, joined to a consideration of the part I am to take in the important business of this day, fills me with an awe hitherto unknown.

Allured by the call of some of my respectable fellow-citizens, with whose request it is always my greatest pleasure to comply, I almost forgot my want of ability to perform what they required.

The mortality of man is a truth, though seldom realized, is as certain as that of his existence. From the creation of the world to the present era, the seeds of death have been implanted in all generations—the principles that are calculated to dissolve our bodies are inherent in our natures, and in the midst of life, we are on the brink of the silent grave. Every moment gives incontestable proof of the assertion, and witnesses the fact. Life is nothing more than a prelude to the grave (its best improvement) but a preparation for eternity.

When we contemplate the idea that soul and body, must, ere long, dissolve the near connection, we are apt to recoil and shudder at the thought; but

pain, disease, and death, are constant attendants upon man, and the justice of God is reconcilable with, and doubtless ordained by Him for the best of purposes. It is confirmed by Divine revelation, that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart. However disagreeable to our natural disposition, the contemplation of death may be, yet it affords more instruction than all the works of genius or fancy. Those clay-cold lodgings where our departed friends and relatives lie, in promiscuous ruin, exhibits a lesson more instructive than the pens of Poets or Philosophers, nor tongues of men or angels can address the human heart in such forcible language as yonder monumental inscriptions; when the conquerer death has spread his sable veil over the body of a departed friend; when divested of its ornaments, the productions of nature. We behold it shrouded in the winding sheet and dressed for the grave, the lifeless body stretched on the gloomy hearse, and borne by friends and relations to the silent mansion of the tomb, there to mingle with its native ashes and moulder to its primitive state.

Death is inevitable, neither the hoary hairs of the venerable and aged sire can avert the deadly blow, nor the wisdom or sagacity of the middle aged can devise a plan whereby they may escape, nor the athletic youth is able to withstand; nor the blooming innocence of the lovely maiden can ward the deadly shaft; nor even the piteous cries of the tender babe move his compassion.

If all that was noble could avail, our beloved *Washington* had still been alive. But, alas, he who once could conquer our temporal foes, must submit to the mandate of Heaven, and fall a victim to the universal homicide. It is not my intention to speak a panegyric on our departed friend. The whole tenor of his life has been a complete emblem of wisdom

and religion, and therefore needs no comment but a few observations may perhaps be expected at this time. O that my genious was equal to the task, that I could extend my voice through the spacious earth, that I could display the immense and glorious picture of the victories and achievments, that could be mentioned of our most intrepid defender.

At this moment a people assembled to express their gratitude to the virtuous citizen who hath deserved it, how agreeable is the task, how we delight in paying him that homage. Him to whom the country owes its safety, its glory, and the foundation of its prosperity. Him to whom America owes its political regeneration.

Couragious philosopher, whose writings have planted the seeds of the revolution; corroded the fetters of slavery; obtunded by degrees the ravings of fanaticism. That citizen whose dauntless courage effected our happy revolution, founded the republic and contended ambition, royalism and anarchy; him, in a word, who laboured to render America happy, flourishing, and free.

A chief in all the ways of battle skill'd,
Great in the council, mighty in the field;
Whose martial arm and steady soul, alone
Hath made the Britons shake, their navy groan,
And their proud empire totter to the throne.

Let us trace our beloved friend through the martial field; what victories he won; what wonders he achieved. He fought, he bled, he conquered, and the trophies of his labours were America's independence and peace. View him in the cabinet, how with unerring wisdom conducts the whole, and like a steady helmsman, stears the vast political machine. View him in the peaceful shades of retirement, the sage and philosopher. But where shall we view him now—alas! he is gone beyond the ken of mortal sight. Washington, our beloved friend and patriot,

is no more! The silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken. Weep then ye venerable fathers, mourn ye middle aged, weep ye youth and virgins, and let all, with a tear of gratitude, bedue his sacred urn; weep one and all ye children of America—though Washington is dead yet still he lives, lives in our hearts and memories, and may he ever live. May generations yet unborn revere the name of Washington! Let fathers to their children recite his deeds, his manly courage, and the toils he bore—his painful sufferings of seven long tedious years of bloody war. Let lively gratitude expand the heart; let veneration for his memory dwell in the mind until universal nature is dissolved.

But language is insufficient, and fails me to paint the worth of this invaluable man, of that illustrious character, who devoted his life to our service. That Washington whose expiring breath wafted a prayer to Heaven for his country. Let it suffice us to say, venerable hero, august philosopher, legislator of the felicity of thy country, what extatic happiness embelised the end of thy career! From thy fortunate asylum, and in the midst of thy brothers, who enjoyed in tranquility the fruit of thy virtues, and the success of thy genius, thou hast sang songs of deliverance. The last looks which thou didst cast around thee, behold America happy—America free. Thy remembrance belongs to all ages; thy memory to all nations; and thy glory to eternity.

Our Washington, the just the wise,
In the dark earth entoomb'd he lies;
His soul through trackless paths has wing'd its way
To scenes of blest repose and everlasting day!
Yet still, the memory of the just,
Will bud and blossom in the dust.

Finally, my friends, let us one and all, that arepresent, realize that all flesh is grass, and that life is but a vapour; may the various instances of mortality,

that are daily sounding in our ears, excite us to a serious preparation for the solemn hour of death. We know not the day nor the hour when the awful messenger may arrive, and then, prepared or not, there is no reprieve. May this providence impress our minds in such a manner as may render it a happy mean of our eternal salvation, so that we may be provided with a sure defence against the weapons of death which fly in secret, that whenever we are summoned from the stage of action, we may evade the second death, and be admitted into that world where all tears shall be wiped away, and then be no more death; when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known, and dwell for ever with the Lord.

The exercises were then closed by prayer, and the farewell anthem, in the following words:

"My friends, I am going a long and tedious journey, never to return! Fare you well my friends, and God grant we may meet together in that world above, where trouble shall cease and harmony shall abound. Hark! my dear friends, for Death hath called me, and I must go and lie down in the cold and silent grave, where the mourner ceases from mourning, and the prisoners are set free; when the rich and the poor are both alike.

Fare you well my friends.

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